

Quarterly Report
African Burial Ground Project
Pursuant to the Amended Memorandum of Agreement

December 31, 2005

This report covers events surrounding the African Burial Ground (ABG) Project for the period of October 1 through December 31, 2005.

Introduction

The activities for this reporting period include setting up the OPEI office at 290 Broadway, celebration of the anniversary of the reburial, the production of a new edition of the newsletter—*African Burial Ground News*, release of the Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground for comment, receipt of revised draft Archaeology Report for final comments, and distribution of the draft Cooperative Agreement for Curation. A brief list of the meetings, telephone conferences, etc., held during this reporting period is provided as Appendix A.

Activities of the Reporting Period

Education/Outreach (OPEI)

During the quarter, OPEI staff worked to set up the temporary office space at 290 Broadway and get equipment and communication operations functioning. By the end of the period, callers were able to reach the office and Internet and voice mail access for staff had been established. Staff provided their ongoing tour and presentation services (See Appendix A).

The month of October was ushered in with OPEI staff and volunteers working on the final two days of the annual *Africans in the Americas: Celebrating the Ancestral Heritage 2005* organized by the Schomburg Center. Activities included a special focus on preparations for the construction of the exterior memorial. Under the theme “Meditations on Compassion and Healing,” expressions of concern encompassed those enduring the tremendous pain of loss and separation due to Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast, famine in Niger, and suffering in Haiti. More than 4,000 people participated in the 3-day weekend of events.

Beginning on Friday, September 30, schoolchildren conducted a *Ring Shout* ceremony along the five perimeter streets of the seven-acre landmark site where historical street banners hung from lampposts—Chambers Street on the southern side, Broadway on its western side, Centre and Lafayette Streets on its eastern side and, Duane Street on its northern side to complete the circle around the burial ground. Hosted by MC Lyte, the event included performances by Women of the Calabash and the cast of the South African musical, *Drumstruck*. The children wore red, black and green bracelets imprinted with the Sankofa symbol and “NY African Burial Ground Project,” and also wrote messages to the ancestors on cards and placed them inside of two hand carved coffins, which will be buried under the exterior memorial designed by Rodney Léon.

The program continued with an ecumenical consecration/affirmation ceremony, that started with a libation, to prepare for the permanent memorial. Another highlight was the

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unveiling of the “African Burial Ground Way” street sign under the direction of Councilmen Bill Perkins and Robert Jackson. The vigil that evening included performances by drummer Louis Hayes with the Cannonball Adderley Legacy Band, and spoken word tributes by Russell Simmons Def Poets Black Ice and Kayo, along with open mic presentations.

Saturday, October 1, began with ecumenical prayers, including blessings from representatives of the Hopi and Winnebago Tribes, and the Native American ensemble, the Silver Clouds. Following the spiritual leaders were performances by artists representing countries in Africa and the African Diaspora including singers, Kaissa, from Cameroon and Ileana Santamaria (Cuban descent); along with The Eleanor Roosevelt Intermediate School Concert Choir, the African Burial Ground Tribute Choir, the Garifuna Dance Company; Adada-Capoeira; and Brooklyn’s Musart Steel Drum Band. On the final day, Sunday, October 2, drummers performed during the afternoon at the African Burial Ground Memorial Site which was open for visitation, and a tribute concert, “The Spiritual: An Underground Railroad” featuring bass vocalist Kevin Maynor was held at the Schomburg Center.

Other special activities during the period included an OPEI volunteer meeting held at 290 Broadway on November 17 during which exterior memorial designer Rodney Léon made a presentation on the inspirations and scholarship that guided his work. More than 350 people attended the Kwanzaa Celebration and Holiday Open House hosted by OPEI on Saturday afternoon, December 10, at 290 Broadway. The event included presentations by author and media personality Camille Yarborough, the Echoes Dance Company, the MusArt Steel Band Quartet, and the Amirikanke African dance and drum ensemble in the lobby. An illustrated presentation by Christopher Moore, author of *Santa and Pete*, a screening of segments from Eric Tate’s documentary film, *Soon I’ll Be Free to Travel Home*, and an area providing special coloring pages for children took place on the 30th floor.

A new edition of the newsletter, *African Burial Ground News* was produced during the quarter and distributed at the December 10 open house and by mail to project supporters. The African Burial Ground was cited as a primary source of inspiration for the New York Historical Society’s exhibition *Slavery in New York* at the opening celebration on October 7. In exhibition related programs, Howard Dodson, director of the Schomburg Center, delivered the opening exhibition lecture on October 18 on the theme “Slavery in the Americas, Slavery in New York”; and on October 22, Christopher Moore, research coordinator at the Schomburg Center, led a tour of early African American historic sites in lower Manhattan, ending at the African Burial Ground.

Interpretive Center (NPS)

The Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground was released at the memorial groundbreaking ceremony on September 28, 2005 and the 30 day public comment period commenced on October 6, 2005. The report was made available to the public on both NPS and GSA websites and mailed to individuals currently on the mailing list and to those who requested copies. Public comments were received via mail, NPS and GSA websites, and during two open house sessions. The open house sessions were held on October 22 at the Brooklyn Public Library and October 24 at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

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The NPS and GSA continue to develop the scope of work for the design and construction of an Interpretive Center in conjunction with the preparation by the NPS of the Draft Management Recommendations.

Exterior Memorial (NPS)

The groundbreaking ceremony, which included participation by Administrator Mr. Perry, was held on September 28, 2005 to mark the site where the memorial will be built. Construction of the Memorial is scheduled to begin in early 2006.

Technical Studies (Corps/Howard University)

Howard University provided the revised draft Archaeology Report to the Corps on December 23, 2005. Copies of the report were provided to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the peer reviewers for their review and comments. Comments are due back to Howard University by mid-January. The comments will be reviewed and incorporated into the final report, which is scheduled to be submitted at the end of February.

Archives Project (Corps)

Archival processing of the photographic collection from the Cobb Laboratory Record Group is approximately 80% complete and data entry for this component is completed. The paper documents from the Cobb Laboratory Record Collection have been completely processed. Archival processing of the paper records from the Bioanthropology Record Group is approximately 60% complete. The processing of the photographic component of this record group is approximately 40% complete and all data entry has been accomplished.

The MCX received and created a preliminary inventory of seven boxes of video cassette recordings held at the GSA project office. MCX staff also received copies of all electronic archival files for the ABG website designed and maintained by Flatiron Enterprises. Additional materials from Flatiron Enterprises will be transferred in January. The archival component of the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) is scheduled for transfer in early January 2006.

The cooperative agreement for curation has been drafted and disseminated for review and revision. Once this process has been completed, negotiations with the curation facility should commence in January 2006.

Skeletal and Dental Samples (Corps/Howard University)

The 20 dental and femoral samples studied by Dr. Thomas Stafford were delivered to Howard University for interim curation. The box of samples was received at Howard University on December 21, 2005.

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Appendix A

Timeline of Meetings and Telephone Conferences conducted by the ABG Project Team

October 1 to December 31, 2005

October 13, 2005 ABG Team Meeting/Conference call (GSA/Corps/NPS/OPEI), New York City

October 27, 2005 ABG Team Meeting/Conference call (GSA/Corps/NPS/OPEI), New York City

November 10, 2005 ABG Team Meeting/Conference call (GSA/Corps/NPS/OPEI), New York City

December 1, 2005 ABG Team Meeting/Conference call (GSA/Corps/NPS/OPEI), New York City

December 15, 2005 ABG Team Meeting/Conference call (GSA/Corps/NPS/OPEI), New York City

Education/Outreach (OPEI) Meeting and Public Outreach

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OCTOBER 2005			
DATE (TIME)	INSTITUTION	SERVICE	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
Wednesday 10.5.12 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	7
Wednesday 10.12.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	11
Wednesday 10.19.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	9
Wednesday 10.26.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	3
Estimated Total for October @ ABG Info. Desk	General Public	Q&A; Dissemination of ABG Materials @ ABG Info. Desk	40

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NOVEMBER 2005			
DATE (TIME)	INSTITUTION	SERVICE	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
Friday 9.30.05 - Sunday 10.2.05	General Public	Ancestral Heritage Celebration Weekend	4,000
Wednesday 11.2.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	8
Tuesday 11.8.05 (1-2:30pm)	Department of Education – Alternative Schools	Documentary Film & Site Tour	30
Wednesday 11.9.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	13
Monday 11.14.05 (9-11am)	David Zimmerman	Archival Research	1
Wednesday 11.16.05 (9-10:30am)	Twilight Academy	Documentary Film & Site Tour	35
Wednesday 11.16.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	14
11.17.05 (6-8pm)	OPEI Volunteers	Volunteer Meeting	23
Wednesday 11.23.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	1
Tuesday 11.29.05 (10:30-12:15am)	High School for Civil Rights	Documentary Film & Site Tour	75
Wednesday 11.30.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	33
Estimated Total for November @ ABG Info. Desk	General Public	Q&A; Dissemination of ABG Materials @ ABG Info. Desk	60
DECEMBER 2005			
DATE (TIME)	INSTITUTION	SERVICE	NUMBER OF PEOPLE
Wednesday	General Public	Tour (on-site)	5

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12.7.05 (12-3pm)			
12.10.05 (12-5pm)	General Public	Kwanzaa/Holiday Open House	350
Monday 12.12.05 (11-12)	Board of Education	Tour	2
Wednesday 12.14.05 (12-3pm)	JHS 56 (15 students) General Public (1)	Tour (on-site)	16
Friday 12.16.05 (9:30-10:30)	The School	Tour (on-site)	15
Monday 12.19.05 (11-12:30)	Satellite Academy	Documentary Film & Site Tour	17
Wednesday 12.21.05 (12-3pm)	Desk closed due to transit strike	Tour (on-site)	0
Wednesday 12.28.05 (12-3pm)	General Public	Tour (on-site)	7
Wednesday 12.28.05 (12-2pm)	NY Fire Department Kwanzaa	African Burial Ground Lecture	29
Thursday 12.29.05 (11:30-1pm)	Beacon After School (canceled)	Documentary Film & Site Tour	24
Thursday 12.29.05 (1-2pm)	Solomon Family Reunion	Site Tour	22
Friday 12.30.05 (1-2pm)	Middle College HS (canceled)	Site Tour	3
Estimated Total for December @ ABG Info. Desk	General Public	Q&A; Dissemination of ABG Materials @ ABG Info. Desk	80